

India Graybill

## A Vine of the Lord's Planting.

Less than six years ago a vine was planted where had grown thorns and thistles and noxious weeds. Room was prepared for it, and He, who planted it, caused it to take deep root. It has been tended with carefulness; the pruning has not been spared; it has often been watered with tears. This vine has grown and flourished and brought forth some fruit, and to-day it promises further and continued increase.

The history of the Mahoba Mission is a record of providential leading, sometimes in ways we knew not of, often in paths which mere human judgment would not have chosen, but always in "right paths," as the sequel has shown. It is a record of what God has wrought, and of some of the ways in which the Good Shepherd is still working to bring into His fold those other sheep who have so long been wandering away from Him.

It was not the choice of your missionaries to locate so far from our other mission points, for various reasons. Instead of a special work we had planned, another has been given us to do. The larger opportunities and responsibilities, which are now so loudly demanding our acceptance, were scarcely sought. In all of this, do we see the wisdom of a plan beyond our own, and the guidance so earnestly sought, though not knowing whither it would lead.

To-day, in the midst of heathen temples and shrines, stands "God's house," as they have named it. Thirteen buildings testify to the liberality of Christian friends of this work in America. Ten of these, or the most important part, our Junior Builders have had in that work. Here seven widows, and not far from five score of girls, have found a home and love, charity and patience to bear with their imperfections of character and help them on to better things. Besides these, during the terrible famine of '96 and '97, several hundred other children passed through this gateway to other Christian homes. Many of these have become Christians, and are now daily praying, that the people in their villages, too, may hear the gospel and be saved.

What shall we say of such an opportunity as this has been, to save these children not only from death by starvation, but to place them in an environment, where they will have a chance for life, present and eternal, such as otherwise would never have opened to them? Surely this is of God, whose praise these little ones are singing to day.

Without an exception, all of our girls, who have come to years of understanding, have already confessed faith in Jesus and taken Him as the guide of their lives. With them to hear is to believe, to believe is to obey. Where has the gathering in, more speedily followed the sowing of the seed? Much of patient teaching will be needed before they attain to perfection in Christian character. Through the training of these children we are, in an especial sense, working for India's tomorrow. These boys and girls, whose lives are being directed into right channels and broadened and enriched, will, it is hoped, go forth to enrich and bless other lives. In this way the work once begun becomes self-perpetuating. There is every reason to hope that through the children that have been brought under Christian influence, by means of India's recent calamities, plague and famine, God's purposes of grace shall yet be revealed, and we shall come to know that not willingly, but to work out a higher good, these appalling afflictions have been permitted.

While the Orphanage and school-work has been most prominent at Mahoba, it by no means represents all that has been or is being done. Beside this, there has been, so far as was possible with our limited force, all the usual routine of work such as is carried on in all Mission Stations, notably the constant preaching of the gospel in the town and surrounding villages. Many who hear, assent to the truth spoken. Some have cast away their idols, but they are not ready to suffer the consequences which a public acceptance of the new faith would involve. An evidence that the enemies of the truth are disturbed is found in the revival of a religious mela or festival, with a spectacular flag, representing the very questionable exploits of some of the Hindu gods. These are set forth as the gods men ought to worship, rather than the unseen, unknown God of the strangers.

A new idea has been introduced among these people of an alien faith, with a practical demonstration of its import. It is the idea of sacrifice for love's sake without expectation of reward for merit. To feed the hungry and clothe the naked; to minister to the sick and sorrowing; to seek relief for the oppressed; to lavish upon others, not our own, time, strength, money, love—everything one may have to give. Such service as this has afforded a demonstration of the real spirit of Christianity and given your missionaries an influence that no amount of mere preaching could have secured.

And this brings me to my message, which is not of past success or achievement, but rather of still larger opportunities which are opening up, compared with which, what has already been done, is the merest beginning.

Hamirpur, in which Mahoba is situated, is one of the southern districts of the Northwest Provinces. The surface of the country is diversified by ranges of picturesque hills, some of them crowned with ruined palaces or fortresses, dating back to feudal times. Between these hills are fertile, well-cultivated valleys. These valleys are dotted with villages, numbering not less than 764 in the district, whose whole population is more than 513,000. Of this number, 480,000 are Hindus and idolaters; the greater part of the remainder are Mohammedans. When the last census was taken there were only 50 Christians in the district, and that meager number included every European man, woman and child, irrespective of age or character. These Europeans are the English officials at Hamirpur, the civil headquarters of the district and the railway employes at Mahoba station and their families. The next census will see the number of Christians considerably more than doubled, and the increase will be of those, who, in honest and good hearts, having received the good seed of the Kingdom of God, are following on, that they may apprehend that for which they have been apprehended of Christ Jesus.

I would bring to you to-day these *five hundred and thirteen thousand Christless souls*. What is our duty towards these unsaved multitudes? By every blessing Christ has brought us, are we not their debtors, and ought we not, as far as in us is,

to preach the Gospel to every creature, and give to them the knowledge of the redemption that has been purchased for them?

By every principle of mission comity this district is ours to evangelize. I speak from deep conviction when I express the belief that when your missionaries entered Mahoba early in 1895 the Disciples of Christ became virtually responsible for the evangelization of the people of Hamirpur. The field is practically ours. We are able to possess it. Let the message read, "Opportunity, *ability*, RESPONSIBILITY," and may God make it plain.

The next six months should see a beginning made in two centers in this district, with a view to permanent occupation. A married missionary should locate at Mahoba for the evangelistic work in and around that station. Six new missionaries for Hamirpur is the least for which to ask. It is understood that men and women are available. They are ready to go down into the mine, but the shafts must be sunk and afterwards the ropes must be steadily, faithfully held. Men and women are ready to venture their all, to give themselves. Are there not some, to whom much of the King's treasure has been committed, who will from that treasure supply the money needed for this enterprise? Against two consecrated human lives will not some of the Lord's stewards place \$5,000, that work in those three centers may be commenced at once, and that without sacrificing other important interests?

Not to the disparagement of any other claim would I plead for Hamirpur. There are other calls that ought to be heeded. Doors are opening on every side. It is becoming plain that India needs, and will demand, an undenominational Christianity, and who other than the Disciples of Christ will, or can, meet this demand? The number of our mission stations could easily be doubled this year if the money to do it were in hand.

*"The gold and the silver are Mine,"* saith the Lord.

"Lovest thou Me more than these?"

Buffalo, N. Y.

MARY GRAYBIEL.

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